

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
OFFICE OF MARINE SAFETY  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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:  
SELENDANG AYU :  
:  
INTERVIEW OF :  
COMMANDER BELL :  
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An interview in the above entitled matter was held  
on Thursday, December 16, 2004, commencing at 10:25 a.m.,  
before:

BRIAN CURTIS, NTSB  
DARRELL HOWELLS, USCG  
MARIETTE BURER, NTSB  
CAPTAIN LEW KWOK YUE, IMC

1                                    P R O C E E D I N G S

2                    COMMANDER BELL:    Good morning Captain.

3                    MR. JONES:    Good morning Captain Bell.    Captain  
4    Bell, I just want to let you know, and if you could  
5    acknowledge that you know, this interview is being recorded,  
6    and if that's all right with you, we'll proceed.

7                    COMMANDER BELL:    Yes, sir that's fine.

8                    MR. JONES:    With me today, sir, is Senior Chief  
9    Sean McPhilamy, from Marine Safety Office, Anchorage, and  
10    Captain Lew, from --

11                    CAPTAIN LEW KWOK YUE:    IMC Shipping, ship's  
12    manager of the vessel, Selendang Ayu.

13                    MR. JONES:    And Captain, sitting in this morning  
14    with us will be Mariette Burer, she's an investigator for  
15    survival factors, and after we go through the interview  
16    process with regards to the operations that day, and like  
17    initial notification, and that kind of area.    I'll turn it  
18    over to Mariette for the -- regarding SAR (phonetic sp.) and  
19    the handling of the evacuees, and those kind of issues, all  
20    right sir?

21                    COMMANDER BELL:    Yes, sir.

22                    MR. JONES:    Captain Bell, again, this is Rob  
23    Jones, and this interview is concerning the incident with  
24    regards to the grounding of the Selendang Ayu, on the 8th of  
25    December, and we would just like to take -- get your take on

1 events of your concern, and if you could please, sir, tell  
2 us, where you were, and what you were captain of when you  
3 first received notification, and I'll just let you tell the  
4 story as good as your memory recollects, and then we'll  
5 proceed with some questioning.

6           COMMANDER BELL: Yes, sir. We got the initial  
7 notification from District 17, early the morning of the 7th.  
8 I believe it was about 5:20 in the morning. I received a  
9 call from my OD, I was asleep, that District 17 asked us to  
10 divert from our current mission, and proceed to the last  
11 known position of Selendang Ayu, and we diverted a few  
12 minutes later. We were 50 to 60 miles away. It gave us an  
13 11:00 arrive on scene time, with the position reports coming  
14 updated from the District 17 via telephone.

15           MR. JONES: Captain, I'm sorry to interrupt. This  
16 is just what I said I wouldn't do, but just so we have a  
17 good time stamp --

18           COMMANDER BELL: Right.

19           MR. JONES: -- you said 05:00 approximately first  
20 notification? What time were you keeping at that time?  
21 Dutch Harbor time?

22           COMMANDER BELL: Dutch Harbor time.

23           MR. JONES: Okay, so that's plus nine?

24           COMMANDER BELL: Yes, sir.

25           MR. JONES: Victor?

1           COMMANDER BELL: Plus nine, right. Plus nine  
2 Victor, and we had that -- the same clocks for the whole  
3 voyage of our patrol.

4           MR. JONES: Okay, great. All right, thank you,  
5 and sorry for interrupting.

6           COMMANDER BELL: Sure, no problem. So, we  
7 received the initial phone call, and it was sometime after  
8 5:00. It was probably closer to 5:30 than it was to 5:00  
9 when we received the initial call, and then the OD made --  
10 turned to make our best speed, a few minutes after that and  
11 we were, because of the sea state at that time, we were only  
12 able to do 10 or 12 knots en route, into the position, and  
13 as tasked by District 17, our initial concern was the  
14 Selendang Ayu drifting toward Bogosloff Island, Bogosloff  
15 and Fire Island, and we didn't get on scene until just after  
16 first light.

17           I believe sunrise was 10:00 that morning, and  
18 arrived about an hour later at 11:00, and we had established  
19 a radio contact with the Selendang Ayu, about an hour before  
20 us arriving on scene, to get an initial assessment. As  
21 reported to us by District 17, the vessel was adrift, and  
22 had been working on their engines to try to repair those.

23           Then, once on scene, we established a radio  
24 communications with the vessel, and told them that we were  
25 there to monitor the situation, and to assist as necessary.

1     The district office had told us that a tug was in route,  
2     and tried to -- or once they arrived on scene, to try to tow  
3     the vessel, and we waited for that vessel to arrive on scene  
4     later that afternoon.

5             We got a call from the district via telephone, as  
6     the vessel was drifting toward Bogosloff Island. Our set  
7     and drift had them passing northeast of Bogosloff between  
8     2.7, and 3.2 miles to the northeast, and so it appeared that  
9     it was going to clear Bogosloff Island, and the district  
10    asked us if we would be able to take them into tow with our  
11    tow line, and so we started to make preparations for that in  
12    the early afternoon, and got conversation from the first tug  
13    that was arriving on scene, which was the Sydney Foss, and  
14    the district indicated us to stand down from our tow since  
15    the Sydney Foss was going to be able to do that.

16            So, we continued to remain on scene, and monitor  
17    the conversations between Selendang Ayu, and the Sydney  
18    Foss, as well as conversations with us and back to district,  
19    and late that evening, shortly after nightfall, Sydney Foss  
20    was able to arrange a tow on Selendang Ayu, and held that  
21    tow for the remainder of the night, with us just maintaining  
22    radio calms with both the Sydney Foss, and the Selendang  
23    Ayu.

24            It was our -- looking at our charts, and our  
25    calculations, the tow -- at least Sydney Foss was not made

1   able to make any ground to the north. That was the  
2   direction they appeared to be able to try to head with the  
3   tow, and then the Sydney Foss reported that they had lost  
4   the tow early that morning, sometime between 7:00 and 8:00.  
5   I don't exactly remember the exact time right now, but a  
6   couple hours before sunrise.

7               Just prior to that the tow parting, a second tug  
8   arrived on scene, which was the James Dunlap, and they had  
9   also been sent out of Dutch, and the conversations that we  
10  had with both of those tugs was to allow first light to  
11  arrive, and see what assistance that the James Dunlap could  
12  provide, but prior to sunrise coming up, the tow line had  
13  parted.

14              Then, from there, we had conversations with the  
15  tug to find out what the status of their tow line was, to  
16  figure out exactly where it had parted, and then started to  
17  discuss options with the Selendang Ayu of looking at trying  
18  to get some of the 26 crew members off. We had asked the  
19  master to identify some of the crew members that were  
20  not -- that were not essential at that point, and based on  
21  conversations we had with the master and the tug, as well,  
22  we started to come up with ideas on what we could do if we  
23  were unable to pass another tow line.

24              Conversations with Sydney Foss and the James  
25  Dunlap, it appeared to us that trying to get an anchor

1 underfoot for the Selendang Ayu, would be useful. At least  
2 it would slow the motion of the vessel towards the beach,  
3 provide us some more time to allow Sydney Foss to fix their  
4 tow line, and even allow us, perhaps, the chance to get a  
5 tow line on them, if the anchor did hold.

6           Selendang Ayu was able to anchor shortly after  
7 that. With us, it looked to be in 53 savins (phonetic sp.)  
8 of water. The Selendang Ayu reported to have 10 shots out,  
9 and I think 11:00, 11:15, or so is when they reported that  
10 the anchor had held, and once it had held, we started again  
11 talking with Sydney Foss, and their abilities to arrange a  
12 tow, James Dunlap, and their abilities to arrange a tow, and  
13 of course, we were at the -- talking, I was talking with my  
14 deck force about their abilities to arrange a tow, and the  
15 first anchor appeared to only hold for about a half an hour,  
16 before it started -- before the vessel started drifting  
17 again to the shoreward.

18           After the first anchor wasn't holding the vessel  
19 anymore, Sydney Foss reported that it would be another  
20 couple of hours before they could finish their tow.  
21 Apparently, their tow line had parted, at the bull nose,  
22 earlier in the day. So, they had to sew a new eye, splice a  
23 new eye into the end of their tow line before they could use  
24 it.

25           James Dunlap reported that they were unable to get

1 anybody out on deck, because their decks were still awash,  
2 and so that's the -- at the time, we were deciding to put  
3 our tow line over, as well as looking at other options to  
4 try to get some of the non essential crew members off. By  
5 then, 6020, one of the rescue helicopters from Bear Station  
6 Kodiak was in the area, and so we were going to try to -- we  
7 tried to make our tow line attach to the vessel, and is also  
8 talking to the master about getting a first group of nine  
9 people off with the first helicopter.

10           The vessel was drifting two knots toward the  
11 beach, and so, we made our approach to pass our tow line,  
12 using line throwing gun, and a graduated messenger. The  
13 line throwing gun was able to get the messenger to the  
14 vessel. The drift rate of the vessel, and our abilities to  
15 try to hold station, we ended up getting about 800 feet of  
16 our messenger over the stern before we started to lose  
17 steerage way, and the vessel reported that the messenger had  
18 parted, and as we were losing that same steerage way, I  
19 ordered the remainder of the messenger to be cut on our  
20 fantail so as to not to foul our screws as we were -- as we  
21 had turned beam to the seas.

22           Shortly after that the Selendang Ayu was able to  
23 lower their starboard anchor, and it appeared to hold the  
24 vessel about a mile from the beach. We were anxious to get  
25 the first nine people off using 6020, and recover those nine



1 people to our decks. 6021 had arrived on scene, and  
2 retrieved nine additional people from the decks.

3 The two helicopters then transferred those nine  
4 people, between themselves, for 6020 to return to Dutch  
5 Harbor, and off load those nine crew members ashore, and  
6 refuel and come back, and 6021 remained on scene with us as  
7 we continued to have conversations with the master that the  
8 anchor was holding at that time.

9 We started to come up with options on trying to  
10 remove, or come up with options for removing, possibly, four  
11 people at once, or taking the eight remainder off, and  
12 bringing them back the next day, if the weather seemed to  
13 hold down. The master said he was going to go back with his  
14 company to discuss those options, and he was still looking  
15 at trying to restart his engines.

16 Late that afternoon, 021 ended up on a low fuel  
17 state, so they had to return for fueling. The master called  
18 us on the radio reporting that they had hit something hard,  
19 or words to that over the radio, and he wanted his crew off  
20 the vessel now. So, we made the efforts to launch our  
21 helicopter, 6513, and as our helicopter left our decks, then  
22 6020 was able to return to the scene, and started hoisting  
23 the remaining eight people off the deck.

24 Then, our helicopter, 6513, reported that 6020 had  
25 crashed into the water, and our helicopter, 13, then

1 recovered four persons out of the water, and returned them  
2 to Dutch Harbor, refueled, and came back, and recovered the  
3 master and the rescue swimmer off the bow of the vessel.  
4 Did two shoreline sweeps, and then returned to Dutch Harbor,  
5 and then we remained on scene for the rest of that night,  
6 and the following day.

7 MR. JONES: Okay, Captain, is that a kind of  
8 estimation right now for the outside?

9 COMMANDER BELL: That's most of the details that I  
10 can remember in a short description, yes.

11 MR. JONES: Okay, I'll start off with some  
12 questions then. This is Rob Jones. Captain, does your  
13 vessel, is it able to monitor all the VHF traffic, and  
14 record it, or is that done somewhere else?

15 COMMANDER BELL: It does record the channels that  
16 we were listening to at that time, yes, and we were  
17 listening to channel 16, 83, and channel 6. Possibly, 21  
18 when we were talking to one of the helios (phonetic sp.) but  
19 we'd have to go back and look at our radio log to see if  
20 there were other channels that were being monitored?

21 MR. JONES: Is that just logged, or is it recorded  
22 somewhere, and are those recordings available?

23 COMMANDER BELL: We did two things. We kept a  
24 written copy of the communications on the bridge, as best as  
25 we could. One of the watch stander's on the bridge was

1 responsible for that but then we have a digital voice  
2 recorder in our radio shack that records real time, the  
3 conversations that occur on our radios.

4 MR. JONES: We'll ask for that if we haven't got  
5 it already, but -- and if you haven't released it to anybody  
6 as far as -- or if there's a way to archive it so it's not  
7 written over, I'm asking you to make sure that can happen  
8 now.

9 COMMANDER BELL: To my knowledge, we have not  
10 released those, the digital recordings, to anyone.

11 MR. JONES: Okay.

12 COMMANDER BELL: Once they're -- once it's  
13 recorded, we can't change that.

14 MR. JONES: Okay, good, we'll go through channels  
15 here, and you know, so everybody's apprized of what we're  
16 asking for, and --

17 COMMANDER BELL: Yes, sir.

18 MR. JONES: -- that'll be asked of you in a short  
19 period.

20 COMMANDER BELL: Yes, sir.

21 MR. JONES: Along those lines, was -- did you hear  
22 any mention of -- with regards to the tugboats, the tug  
23 vessels, the mention of salvage over the radio, specifically  
24 addressed to yourselves, the Alex Haley?

25 COMMANDER BELL: There was a third tug on scene,

1 the tug Redeemer, and my understanding that they were a  
2 salvage tug, but I'm not sure if -- I don't recall salvage  
3 being used in terms for -- at least for Alex Haley, anyway.

4 MR. JONES: That's fine. I mean, we're just --  
5 I'm just trying to track down the possibility of something  
6 being heard over the airwaves as a claim to salvage, and  
7 only addressing you in respect that they thought you were,  
8 you know, in the on-scene command, and offering their  
9 services. So, that's fine. That question's been asked and  
10 answered, and we'll -- we should be able to hear it in a  
11 radio log.

12 COMMANDER BELL: Yes, sir.

13 MR. JONES: During the course of the incident, you  
14 said that you know, you were in touch with the tugs. Do you  
15 remember conversations, at least over the VHF, where there  
16 was 16 or 6 between the James Dunlap and the master of the  
17 Selendang Ayu?

18 COMMANDER BELL: No, not between James Dunlap, no.

19 MR. JONES: The -- you had mentioned a  
20 steering -- a loss of steerage way. Can you just clarify  
21 that was -- whether that was just because of the seaway, or  
22 was that a mechanical failure?

23 COMMANDER BELL: No, sir, that was due to -- due  
24 to the sea states. We had just passed a messenger, and they  
25 had a 2-knot drift rate toward the beach, and wanted to try

1 to slow that separation for us. The Selendang Ayu reported  
2 they were having difficulties pulling in the messenger, and  
3 my understanding to that was it was being pulled away by the  
4 seas. Plus, our separation rate. So, I asked our OOD to  
5 slow down.

6 We were speeding ahead at 22 psi, which  
7 is -- which basically held us, head to the seas, for most of  
8 that day. Our doppler log had us doing .5 to 1.0-knots  
9 through the water at that speed, or that psi, and asked the  
10 OD to try to slow that rate down, and we dropped to 15 psi,  
11 and when that happened, a series of large waves came, and  
12 turned us to starboard, back toward the Selendang Ayu, and a  
13 beam to the seas.

14 MR. JONES: Could you estimate, at that time,  
15 about how far off you were from the Selendang Ayu?

16 COMMANDER BELL: We were between 300 and 400  
17 yards. We had an individual on the radar that was calling  
18 off ranges.

19 MR. JONES: Okay.

20 COMMANDER BELL: That led to the decision --  
21 partly to the decision for me to cut our messenger. At the  
22 time, we were getting these updates from the radar operator.  
23 We -- between that 300 and 400 yards, we had lost steerage  
24 way. Heard over the radio that the messenger had parted.  
25 So, I had asked us to cut our line at the same time, and

1 with us only having a 1,000 feet, with most likely 900 feet  
2 of that to be usable for towing. We were at the extremes of  
3 the length of our tow line at that 300 to 400 yards.

4 MR. JONES: With regards to the anchoring, did you  
5 give any instruction to the Selendang Ayu for anchoring?

6 COMMANDER BELL: No, I don't believe we gave any  
7 specific instructions. We talked with both the tugs on  
8 options, after the tow line -- after Sydney Foss reported  
9 they weren't going to be able to get a -- the first tow line  
10 over. We had asked the master, at the Selendang Ayu,  
11 how -- if their anchors were workable, and how much chain  
12 they had on board.

13 It was reported back to us that they had 11 shots,  
14 and so we recommended that based on our plot, that appeared  
15 to us that the first opportunity that he would have to  
16 anchor would be at about a 50 fathom mark that they were  
17 drifting over. Looking at the best options of a 3-to-1  
18 ratio, him using, you know, all his chain out the 10 shots,  
19 but I don't believe we provided him specific directions on  
20 how much shot to put over, or when to put that down. Ten  
21 shots seemed to be, from our perspective, the best to use at  
22 the 50-fathom mark.

23 MR. JONES: So that takes care of the port anchor.  
24 Anything further, once the -- once the starboard anchor  
25 went down, with regards to recommendations, or just as you

1 described, for the port anchor?

2                   COMMANDER BELL:   (Indiscernible.) I believe  
3 after it -- when the port anchor went down, the vessel,  
4 Selendang Ayu, called us, and asking if we recommended  
5 dropping the starboard anchor, and we had tried to get in  
6 touch with Sydney Foss, and see what -- if they had any  
7 recommendations along those lines.

8                   We did not provide additional direction to lower  
9 the starboard anchor, and once the port anchor failed, and  
10 started drifting toward the shore, we had discussed options  
11 using the starboard anchor, and the Selendang Ayu reported  
12 back that they were worried about it fouling, or words to  
13 that effect, on the port anchors. It was fair let across  
14 the bow, back up to the north.

15                  MR. JONES: When the -- go ahead, go ahead,  
16 Captain.

17                  COMMANDER BELL: Yeah, we just -- I was thinking,  
18 too, when we -- after the first anchor wasn't holding any  
19 longer, and our whole attempt to try to take the vessel, or  
20 pass the vessel, our tow line was to the hopes that we would  
21 at least be able to slow his motion toward the beach, even,  
22 perhaps, turn his head to wind, or head to the seas that  
23 would allow that port anchor to clear, and allow his  
24 starboard anchor to run free.

25                  MR. JONES: Captain, at this time, can you

1 estimate the wave height, and the force of the wind?

2           COMMANDER BELL: We recorded every hour. We had  
3 an observation for winds and waves. Throughout the day, on  
4 the 8th, the seas built from the morning through until that  
5 afternoon. We had recorded 20-foot seas in our logs a  
6 couple of times. I know I can report that we saw waves in  
7 excess of 30-feet. Our bridge height is 35-feet, and there  
8 was times where we had to look up from our vantage point on  
9 the bridge, up, to see the top of a wave. So, some wave  
10 heights were even higher than that.

11           I know the swell set appeared to get higher, the  
12 closer we got to the beach, especially inside three miles.  
13 The swells appeared to be regular, outside of that up  
14 through that first anchorage, and then, as we drifted closer  
15 to the beach from there, the waves grew higher throughout  
16 the day.

17           MR. JONES: Captain, was there any video recording  
18 done by anyone in your crew, just of the days' events, or at  
19 least the sea state?

20           COMMANDER BELL: I have -- I have several still  
21 pictures, and four or five video clips of 30 to 40 seconds  
22 apiece that may give some indication as to the sea state.

23           MR. JONES: Okay, I'll ask through the Coast Guard  
24 here, for those. If you could make them available to them  
25 that would be great. You know, copies that would be fine.



1 It doesn't have to be the original, but you know, it does  
2 paint a picture of what you were dealing with out there for  
3 a lot of people that have never seen stuff like that before,  
4 and that would be good.

5 COMMANDER BELL: Yes, sir.

6 MR. JONES: I don't want you to speculate,  
7 Captain, but the time it took the Foss to reave in their tow  
8 line, were you giving them any indication of you know, how's  
9 it going? Did you call for an update? Were they going to  
10 be able to get a line back on? You know, did they have to  
11 wait for an eye to be spliced, or couldn't they send a  
12 bitter end up, and put it around the bits of the bow of the  
13 Selendang? Any of those kind of discussions were ensued?

14 COMMANDER BELL: We talked with the -- after the  
15 tow line parted, we talked with the Sydney Foss a couple of  
16 times on how long it would take them to pull their line back  
17 in. I believe it took more than an hour for them to  
18 retrieve the tow. I do not know how much of their tow line  
19 that they actually had out.

20 I know, once they originally arrived on scene,  
21 they told us they had 1,800 feet of two-inch cable, and  
22 another 800 feet of nine-inch rouser that was marred to the  
23 wire, which later reported that morning that it appeared to  
24 have parted at where it went through the bull nose on the  
25 vessel. So, they didn't lose much of their tow line.

1           We called them periodically, through that morning  
2   to get up dates. No firm estimates as to when they'd be  
3   able to put the line back over. They reported back to us,  
4   you know, heavy sea state, and you know, washing, you know,  
5   water across their decks. Reported that it was very  
6   difficult for his folks, for his crew, to be out on deck  
7   working with the tow line.

8           He reported some time that it would be involved to  
9   get his deck readied again to put it back over. He  
10   had -- they were attempting to put an eye splice back in.  
11   Whether they could've put the -- sent the tow line back over  
12   with or without that I'm not sure I was in the best position  
13   to answer that being not on his vessel, or familiar with his  
14   towing procedures.

15           MR. JONES: That's understandable. I wouldn't  
16   want you to try to. I was just trying to get if there was a  
17   sense of urgency, and again, I know what you were dealing  
18   with. Was there a sense of urgency over the radios that you  
19   know, that people were doing everything they possibly could,  
20   given the sea state, and the parameters everyone could work  
21   in?

22           COMMANDER BELL: We had conversations with the  
23   Selendang Ayu, and the James Dunlap, and the Sydney Foss,  
24   walking off the set in drift, and so, we were communicating  
25   with (indiscernible) other -- well on the time line that we

1     were dealing with, on the drift rate toward the beach.

2                     Whether there was urgency over the radio, I'm not  
3     sure I would call that urgency, outside of you know, just  
4     having the communications, and understanding the time that  
5     we had left to deal with.

6                     MR. JONES: All right, I appreciate that.  
7     Captain, do you have a -- was the Alex Haley plotting  
8     the -- I know you were plotting, but was it able to be  
9     archived, the drift rate, or the course, actually, over the  
10    water, over the ground of the Selendang Ayu, as it made its  
11    way towards the beach?

12                    COMMANDER BELL: We did it -- at different periods  
13    of time, we had different fixed intervals, but I know we had  
14    the latter part, the latter part of the day of the 8th,  
15    especially after the first anchor wasn't holding anymore.  
16    We took our position, and the Selendang Ayu's position,  
17    every six minutes, and we have that recorded in one of our  
18    logs, yes.

19                    MR. JONES: Okay, great, if we could get that  
20    also, and also, Captain, we'd be asking for a crew list of  
21    your vessel that day, just for note taking purposes.

22                    COMMANDER BELL: A list of the members of my crew?

23                    MR. JONES: Yes, sir.

24                    COMMANDER BELL: All right.

25                    MR. JONES: Just because we're going down numbers

1 right now, I thought I'd throw that in, but I think our  
2 survival factors investigator would want that. We've done  
3 that basically, for all the tug -- all the vessels  
4 concerned, and also, sir, if -- whatever you feel would be a  
5 best characterization of your vessel? Like if you have a  
6 vessel particular sheet. Again, we do that for the  
7 Selendang Ayu, for the Sydney Foss, for the James Dunlap,  
8 just to show size and description, horse power that kind  
9 of -- capabilities, and again, that's just part --

10 COMMANDER BELL: We have a ship's data information  
11 sheet that's on our web page that I can -- that has that  
12 information.

13 MR. JONES: That would be great. So, I'm sure we  
14 could find that easy enough, or if you don't think we can  
15 find it over the web, or e-mail, if you could print one out,  
16 and maybe fax that to the MS -- we'll put that on our list  
17 to ask for, and that was called the what, a vessel data  
18 sheet, or specific sheet, or --

19 COMMANDER BELL: Right, ship's data sheet.

20 MR. JONES: Okay, Captain, I'm going to open the  
21 questioning up now to Mr. McPhilamy, and then Captain Lew.  
22 Thanks a lot, you've been very helpful.

23 COMMANDER BELL: Yes, sir.

24 MR. MCPHILAMY: Good morning, this is Senior Chief  
25 MR. McPhilamy. To follow up with a couple of concerns, if

1    you don't mind, do you recall any direction from any party  
2    to place on board the Selendang Ayu, any materials?

3                COMMANDER BELL:  No, I don't believe so.

4                MR. MCPHILAMY:  Thank you very much.  Can you  
5    relate, Captain, in your experience, the weather conditions  
6    that you observed over that two-day period to conditions  
7    found in the Bering, and that operation area, frame of  
8    references to yourself, and your sea time in that regard?

9                COMMANDER BELL:  I'm sorry, say that -- go ahead  
10   and say that again.

11               MR. MCPHILAMY:  My question in regards to your  
12   experience, if you can relate the weather conditions that  
13   you experienced and observed in the Bering Sea?  Was this a  
14   normal day?  Was this out of extremes?  Was it calmer than  
15   normal?

16               COMMANDER BELL:  Okay, I understand now.  
17   The -- we had been underway, we got underway November 5th  
18   for what we call our maritime boundary line patrol, which is  
19   up well north in the Bering Sea, 60 North, 175 West.  It was  
20   our patrolled area for that given patrol, and the lows, the  
21   systems that came across that developed most of the weather,  
22   seemed, at least for the past month, seemed quicker than  
23   usual.

24               Usually, you have, you know, three days of bad  
25   weather, then three days of good weather.  We never seemed

1 to see that (indiscernible) for this particular month, and  
2 so, winds of 30, 40, even 50 knots, seemed to be commonplace  
3 over -- in any given day. Even the night -- the night that  
4 we received a call from District that sets a divert, the  
5 winds were already 30, 35, even 40 knots that evening, and  
6 with the seas starting to build.

7 I think that the evening that we had the call, we  
8 were logging 15 to 17-foot seas, but it appeared to me that  
9 the winds stayed out of the north for a longer period of  
10 time than they had previously. Most of the previous days to  
11 that most of the winds switched steady out for 12 to 16  
12 hours, and that's just a guess on my part, on the exact  
13 duration, but this one seemed to stay out of the north.  
14 Well, out of the northwest, for a a longer period of time.

15 All day on the 7th, they were out of the  
16 northwest, and again, all day on the 8th, they were out of  
17 the northwest, and the weather information that we looked  
18 at, had that low that was generating those winds stationary,  
19 and which to me, increased the sea state beyond the normal  
20 18 to 20 feet that we were expecting, and then, getting  
21 closer inside the bay, the seas just (indiscernible) to  
22 build and build as we were getting closer and closer to the  
23 shore, but certainly, that was the roughest water that we  
24 had seen during that -- during that patrol.

25 MR. MCPHILAMY: Thank you very much. Relating

1 now, back to the evening of the 8th, the afternoon as it is  
2 approaching sunset, 6021, you related, had reported low on  
3 fuel, and 6513 was launched from your deck, is that correct,  
4 sir?

5               COMMANDER BELL: 6021 was on scene, and reported  
6 to be low on fuel, and needed to return to base for  
7 refueling, and our reason for launching 6513 came up later  
8 than that. Those two events were disconnected.

9               MR. MCPHILAMY: Thank you very much. Do you know  
10 the status of 6021? When you say, on base, did she go back  
11 to Dutch Harbor for refueling?

12              COMMANDER BELL: The -- 6021 was returning to Cole  
13 Bay for refueling.

14              MR. MCPHILAMY: Thank you very much. At the time  
15 of the reported crash of the 6020 by the 6513, what was your  
16 approximate distance, the Haley's distance, from the  
17 Selendang Ayu?

18              COMMANDER BELL: About three miles.

19              MR. MCPHILAMY: Thank you very much. Could you  
20 please describe your tow line? The 1,000-foot tow line.

21              COMMANDER BELL: Our tow line is 8-inch nylon, and  
22 it was staked out on deck marred to a graduated messenger of  
23 about 600-feet, which we originally passed a shot cord via  
24 line throwing gun.

25              MR. MCPHILAMY: Approximately how much of the

1 graduated messenger, do you estimate, was lost?

2           COMMANDER BELL: The majority of the messenger was  
3 over the fantail when we cut it on our end. So, I don't  
4 know the exact numbers, but my understanding is most of it.

5           MR. MCPHILAMY: Thank you very much. Commander  
6 Bell, does the Haley have an ECTIS or electronic turning  
7 system installed?

8           COMMANDER BELL: We do.

9           MR. MCPHILAMY: Does that system record, or is  
10 that just a (indiscernible)?

11          COMMANDER BELL: No, it records, but only our  
12 position.

13          MR. MCPHILAMY: Is that linked through the radar  
14 data also?

15          COMMANDER BELL: It is for fixed position, for our  
16 fixing information, yes, but the GPS is tied into that as  
17 well.

18          MR. MCPHILAMY: Thank you. Is the record of that  
19 stored and available?

20          COMMANDER BELL: I don't know.

21          MR. MCPHILAMY: Okay, thank you very much, and  
22 then, finally, I'd just like to ask if, prior to the towing  
23 evolution, did you conduct a risk assessment discussion?

24          COMMANDER BELL: Yes, we did.

25          MR. MCPHILAMY: Can you describe that risk



1     assessment procedure, please?

2                   COMMANDER BELL:  Yes, we had talked about giving  
3     the Selendang Ayu our tow line on several different  
4     occasions.  Talking with myself, the executive officers'  
5     operations officer, and the first lieutenant as well as the  
6     chief marifield (phonetic sp.) (indiscernible) who's our  
7     BMC, and they had given a couple of safety briefs down on  
8     the mess deck, and talked about our procedures.  We have an  
9     established towing bill, with our procedures on board.

10                  The only time we got to the risk assessment is  
11     when we get to all stations manned, and we call the  
12     principal players to the bridge, and we use our  
13     (indiscernible).  Our risk assessment matrix is called GAR,  
14     which stands for green, amber, red, and we assign a number 0  
15     through 10.  The numbers increasing on the level of risk,  
16     and we try to articulate that amongst ourselves as to why we  
17     picked a different number.

18                  I believe we ended up with a number of 27, which  
19     for us was amber, or medium risk, and most of those  
20     were -- the higher numbers, if I recall, were attributed to  
21     weather, and event complexity.  Of course, the extreme  
22     weather that we were looking at, we had already seen.  
23     Twenty to 25-foot swells consistently, and then, some even  
24     over 30-feet, which contributed to the vessel drift rate of  
25     almost two knots, and then the event complexity of us

1 getting a tow line, under those conditions, up to the bow,  
2 and then getting them to haul that aboard, was -- increased  
3 those numbers.

4 We had no means to mitigate those areas. We also  
5 look at -- once we finish our assessment, we try to look at  
6 areas to mitigate those. Mitigating the weather was not  
7 much we could do with that. The event complexity. We  
8 reviewed our procedures, reviewed the communications that we  
9 had, which consisted of communications.

10 We had hand-held HF radios, from the bridge to the  
11 fantail, and to the flight deck. To the line supervisor,  
12 and the towing supervisor, back (indiscernible) and sticking  
13 to standard procedures, as outlined in our towing brief.

14 After the risk assessment, right prior to  
15 authorizing the gunners mate to pass the line. Re-evaluated  
16 that risk with the XO on the bridge, and didn't change any  
17 of the numbers, and still had it at medium or middle area in  
18 amber.

19 MR. MCPHILAMY: Commander Bell, thank you very  
20 much. I'm going to pass over to Captain Lew, with IMC.

21 COMMANDER BELL: Yes, sir.

22 CAPTAIN LEW KWOK YUE: Good morning Captain  
23 Commander Bell. I would like to ask you, when you were  
24 about three miles off from the Selendang Ayu, would you, by  
25 any chance, know how far the (indiscernible) Sydney Foss,

1 and James Dunlap is from Selendang Ayu, itself?

2           COMMANDER BELL: Not exactly their distance. They  
3 were in much closer than we were. We had turned away from  
4 the vessel to get on a flight course, so we could conduct  
5 helicopter operations. So, that required us to be heading  
6 into the seas and the wind, and both of those vessels were  
7 astern of us, closer to the Selendang Ayu.

8           CAPTAIN LEW KWOK YUE: Would I say that they would  
9 be less than three miles off from the Selendang Ayu, itself?

10          COMMANDER BELL: They were in much closer. The  
11 exact distance, we had conversations with both of them.  
12 Let's see, we had conversations with Sydney Foss at one  
13 point, about them trying to get alongside the vessel. So  
14 that certainly, would've put them much closer. The exact  
15 distance, I'm not -- we weren't plotting them on our -- on  
16 our chart, or on our pieces of paper.

17          CAPTAIN LEW KWOK YUE: Could you re-read this  
18 (indiscernible) your positions, prior to sending the  
19 messengers, and your position when you were sending your  
20 messengers to the Selendang Ayu? The position that you are  
21 relative to --

22          COMMANDER BELL: We -- after the -- after we made  
23 the determination to send our tow line over at that time, we  
24 were north of the vessel, about a mile and a half, and  
25 decided our best option, to try to pass the messenger, would

1 be to get as close as we could to -- toward land, and come  
2 back up into the seas and swells (indiscernible) as we  
3 passed the vessel's port bow, to pass our tow line.

4               So, we proceeded south toward the beach, and  
5 turned around about a mile from the beach, and proceeded up  
6 swell at 22 psi. It gave us a little over a half a knot,  
7 ourselves, through the water. As Selendang Ayu drifted down  
8 towards us, they were off our starboard side, and our folks  
9 on the flight deck is where we pass our line from. We're  
10 able to get a good passing shot with the line throwing gun  
11 from there.

12              I was on the bridge, listening to radio  
13 communications from the vessel, talk, and listening to my  
14 officer of the deck, who was out on the starboard bridge  
15 wing, giving helm and engine commands, and actually passing  
16 the word to the towing captain on the flight deck to pass  
17 the tow, and when we passed the vessel, we were about 100  
18 yards off of their bow, when we passed the messenger.

19              CAPTAIN LEW KWOK YUE: What position would you be  
20 when the line parted, relative to the ship? Were you on the  
21 starboard side, or right ahead of the vessel, itself?

22              COMMANDER BELL: We were on their starboard. As  
23 we -- as the tow line -- as the messenger was going over our  
24 fantail, the rate of separation appeared to be large, even  
25 Selendang Ayu reported they were having difficulties pulling

1 on the messenger. So, we tried to slow down, and when we  
2 lost that steerage way, the seas turned us completely to  
3 starboard.

4               So, we were port beam to the winds and seas, and  
5 we were on a parallel, but reciprocal heading from Selendang  
6 Ayu. So, we're off of their starboard bow now. So, their  
7 starboard bow to our starboard beam, when the line parted,  
8 and we cut our messenger on our end, and we remained on  
9 their starboard bow for 30 or 40 seconds before we were able  
10 to get up enough thrust from our engines to turn back up  
11 into the seas to port.

12              CAPTAIN LEW KWOK YUE: When the line parted, and  
13 you're still away, you get away from the vessels, was there  
14 a consideration for second attempt to get back to the ship  
15 again?

16              COMMANDER BELL: Yes, sir, our deck force started  
17 to make arrangements to pass the tow line again, and at that  
18 time, Selendang Ayu was reporting to us that they were  
19 starting to lower their starboard anchor, and our lookouts  
20 could see that the anchor was -- the starboard anchor was  
21 moving, and as the anchor started to catch, we had discussed  
22 putting another tow line over, to help assist, taking some  
23 of that stress off of that starboard anchor, but due to the  
24 proximity to the beach, and the size of the swells growing,  
25 as we got close to the beach, the discussion that I had with

1 my officer of the deck, who was Chief Ross that it would've  
2 required us to put our ship beam to the seas, in making that  
3 next approach, and with the swells and the seas as they  
4 were, the risk, from my decision, was too great to attempt  
5 to try to pass a second line when the vessel had finished,  
6 settled out on that second anchor, less than that mile from  
7 the beach.

8 CAPTAIN LEW KWOK YUE: Thank you very much. No  
9 other questions.

10 MR. JONES: Thanks Captain, Rob Jones again.  
11 Captain, you just --

12 COMMANDER BELL: Yes, sir.

13 MR. JONES: -- just going back to what you had  
14 just talked about. When you were on that reciprocal  
15 heading, your starboard side to the Selendang's starboard  
16 bow, do you have a -- can you remember what your heading  
17 was?

18 COMMANDER BELL: I don't recall what it was  
19 specifically, no.

20 MR. JONES: Okay.

21 COMMANDER BELL: I mean, I can -- they -- we  
22 were -- the Selendang Ayu was laying beam to the seas, and  
23 the seas were all out of the northwest, as well as the  
24 winds. The winds were 40, 50 knots, and we even recorded  
25 gusts to 60 at that time, and as we turned to starboard,

1 the -- I recall having a specific conversation with Chief  
2 Ross, our OD, that we had turned more the 90 degrees off our  
3 original heading.

4 MR. JONES: So, if the seas are out of the  
5 northwest, and she's beamed to, we can kind of approximate  
6 she's around, she's pointed into the northeast, around 0,  
7 40, or somewhere about that.

8 COMMANDER BELL: No, she -- her bow was off to the  
9 north, her bow was west.

10 MR. JONES: So, her bow was west? Okay, my  
11 mistake.

12 COMMANDER BELL: Her bow was west. So,  
13 she's -- as we're approaching, she's going beam port side to  
14 land.

15 MR. JONES: So, let me redo this now. She's beam  
16 to the sea, starboard side to the seas, she's pointed -- or  
17 heading somewhat west, and that's why her port anchor is  
18 foul -- or not foul, but around the stem, close -- you know,  
19 along side the hull, around the stem, and back off to the  
20 north?

21 COMMANDER BELL: Yes, sir that -- her -- when  
22 we -- when we made the approach, the -- our lookouts  
23 originally told us that they could see the anchor chain up,  
24 or anchor cable, up around the bow, and as we made our  
25 approach, it was clearly visible, up and around, running

1 from the port side (indiscernible) around, across the bow of  
2 the ship, and I know we have that in some of those pictures  
3 that you asked about earlier.

4 MR. JONES: Okay, great. Yeah, so, when you got  
5 turned about a beam to beam, your starboard side to her  
6 starboard side, you were almost, and don't let me put words  
7 in your mouth, but I'm just drawing a picture here. You  
8 were (indiscernible) out into the east, or the -- a little  
9 south of east, with your heading?

10 COMMANDER BELL: We're pointing -- yes, we're  
11 pointing to east this time, yes.

12 MR. JONES: All right, just going back, Captain,  
13 over the 1,000 nylon, the 8-inch rouser you said you had, do  
14 you know, offhand, the breaking strength of that? Just  
15 curious.

16 COMMANDER BELL: I do not.

17 MR. JONES: Again, I'll ask through the command  
18 center here, and through our liaisons, but that risk  
19 assessment you had of the situation, and the GAR, the -- how  
20 you come up with the number, and your established towing  
21 bill that would be some good documentation that we would  
22 like to see. Just to show how you went about assessing the  
23 risk, and prior to taking on the you know, operation. So,  
24 we would ask for that if that's available.

25 COMMANDER BELL: If we have written documentation



1 of that I don't -- I'm not sure if we actually put that into  
2 the ship's smooth log. Our officer of the deck does a pre  
3 towing checklist --

4 MR. JONES: Okay.

5 COMMANDER BELL: -- and if we actually recorded  
6 the numbers that we had on the bridge, it would've been, it  
7 would've likely have been recorded on that -- on that  
8 checklist that the OOD uses.

9 MR. JONES: Okay.

10 COMMANDER BELL: I can't recall at this point. I  
11 know we had that on the bridge. We have a placard that we  
12 hand up that we hang up on the bridge, and write these  
13 numbers down with a grease pencil, and normally record them  
14 on the evolution checklist, or check sheet that we're using  
15 for that time, but I can't recall if the OOD actually  
16 recorded them on that sheet, but that would be the best  
17 place to find them.

18 MR. JONES: Captain, I have one more question, and  
19 this is how we usually end an interview, and it's only  
20 because I'm going to step out of here, and then turn it over  
21 to Ms. Burer, but if you can just, and it's kind of a just  
22 summation. If you could think of anything that would've  
23 prevented this, or what could be done different the next  
24 time, or you know, a safety recommendation of your own, now  
25 is a good time to take a second and think about it, and see

1    what we can come up with.  You were the man on scene, and  
2    you did see a lot of this -- a lot more of this than we'd  
3    ever be able to visualize.

4                COMMANDER BELL:  Yes, sir, I'm in -- since even  
5    the morning of the 7th, when we first got the call, I've  
6    gone over this, especially how things ended with 6020.  I've  
7    gone over this many times in my head, and asked myself if  
8    there would be anything that I would do differently or  
9    change, and I've tried to go back, and I can't come up with  
10   anything just looking at the information that I've had.

11               I've thought about trying to sit down, and go over  
12   the voice logs that were recorded just to try to straighten  
13   it all out again, or review it all in my head to see if I  
14   could come up with anything, but I haven't had the time to  
15   go back and review that voice log at this point.  So, I  
16   haven't come up with anything that I would do differently,  
17   or I'd change, up until now.

18               I'm hoping I'll get the chance to go back and  
19   listen to all the actual communications, to try to piece  
20   back you know, specifically, my thought process with the  
21   time line that we had.

22               MR. JONES:  I appreciate your time, Captain, and  
23   good luck to you, and I'll turn it over right now to  
24   Mariette, and I'll sign off.'

25               MR. HENNESSY:  Captain, this is Lieutenant

1 Commander Bill Hennessy. I'm sitting with Captain Bell. I  
2 just want to understand who we're turning it over to, and is  
3 this still part of the NTSB investigation?

4 MR. JONES: Yes, this is very much a part of it.  
5 Mariette is the group chairman for survival factors, and  
6 what she looks into is with regards to the crew, and how  
7 they were, you know, evacuated from the vessel, Coast Guard  
8 procedures, time lines with regard to the helicopters that  
9 were on scene, from -- not only from ashore, but from the  
10 Alex Haley.

11 If this was an event that took place on land,  
12 where -- I mean close to land, where shore facilities were  
13 used, such as police, and fire, and EMT's, this is the area  
14 of expertise that Mariette would also pursue. It's a group  
15 that we have formulated, with all our investigations, with  
16 regards to engineering, human factors, survival factors, and  
17 what I just completed, which was really the deck operations,  
18 or operations of the incident.

19 Okay? She is an NTSB investigator, and she's been  
20 conducting the investigation since we've been on scene, with  
21 those aspects. Okay, sir?

22 COMMANDER BELL: Thank you very much.

23 MR. JONES: All right, I'll sign off now, and  
24 again, Captain, and Lieutenant Commander, thank you for your  
25 time.

1                   COMMANDER BELL: Yes, sir, thank you.

2                   MS. BURER: Good morning. My name is Mariette  
3 Burer, with National Transportation Safety Board, and like  
4 Rob said, I'm the group chairman of the survival factors.  
5 How are you this morning?

6                   COMMANDER BELL: I'm well, thank you, ma'am.

7                   MS. BURER: Basically, what I would like to do is  
8 just get a little bit of background as far as personnel is  
9 concerned. Your daily, kind of, activities, what a normal  
10 day would consist of for you. Those types of things. So,  
11 if you wouldn't mind, can you tell me exactly who -- what a  
12 normal crew would consist of that day? A day, a typical  
13 day?

14                  COMMANDER BELL: Sure, we have a crew of about  
15 100. We had a couple of folks that were TAD and not on the  
16 ship at the time, but a crew of 100. The normal ocean watch  
17 stations for us, anybody that would be on a particular  
18 watch, is usually on a watch for four hours. Our standard  
19 watch times run, starting at 04, and then shift watches  
20 every four hours after that.

21                  The bridge watch team can have three to five  
22 people on watch, usually consisting of an officer of the  
23 deck, a quarter master of the watch, a helmsman, a lookout,  
24 and a (indiscernible) mate of the watch. A (indiscernible)  
25 mate of the watch usually makes the rounds about the decks.

1     That's on the bridge team, and then there's five or six  
2     watch standers, standing engineering, and auxiliary machine  
3     room watches down -- watching our switchboard.

4             The rest of the folks on board would be doing  
5     their normal underway work activities, whether that would be  
6     maintenance, or ship work that corresponds with their  
7     particular duties.

8             MS. BURER:   What would you say would be the  
9     mission of the Alex Haley cutter?

10            COMMANDER BELL:  At the time of -- at the time of  
11     this one, or just our general description of the vessel?

12            MS. BURER:   Both, please, your general mission,  
13     and then also the one that happened with the incident.

14            COMMANDER BELL:  The missions that we have listed  
15     on our website, as I understand them, are homeland security,  
16     both fisheries patrols in the Bering Sea, and then, search  
17     and rescue.  Our primary mission for this particular patrol  
18     was enforcing the U.S. laws and treaties on the maritime  
19     boundary line, the U.S. Russian line up further north in the  
20     Bering Sea.

21            At this time, during this patrol, we were doing  
22     domestic fisheries, just north of Unimak, and north of  
23     Unalaska, doing for the very small population of fishing  
24     vessels that were remaining out on scene at that time of  
25     year, and then we were diverted from that mission of law

1 enforcement, to search and rescue diverting by district to  
2 standby and assist Selendang Ayu as needed.

3 MS. BURER: Do you especially train with your crew  
4 in grounding?

5 COMMANDER BELL: In groundings?

6 MS. BURER: Yes. Are you still there?

7 COMMANDER BELL: Yes, we are.

8 MS. BURER: Okay, do you train especially for  
9 grounding?

10 COMMANDER BELL: No, we do not.

11 MS. BURER: I guess, going to that particular  
12 incident. I guess, the way that I understood it, was that  
13 originally, District 17 directed Alex Haley to take the  
14 vessel in tow. Is that correct?

15 COMMANDER BELL: Yes.

16 MS. BURER: And then, afterwards, the District 17  
17 allowed the Sydney Foss to take it in tow. Do you know what  
18 the reasons were for the switch?

19 COMMANDER BELL: I'm not sure if I know the exact  
20 reasons, but the conversation that I had with District 17,  
21 specifically with Captain Glen, who was in the command  
22 center, for the -- as SMC, had cast us originally to take  
23 them into tow. We were concerned about the drift rate  
24 towards Bogosloff and Fire Island, and had looked into tried  
25 to at least slow the vessel down. Our abilities to tow

1 under those conditions, was not very favorable, and once we  
2 had notification that the Sydney Foss was going to be  
3 arriving on scene, the decision to allow them to take the  
4 tow, was communicated back down to us, as once they got on  
5 scene.

6 MS. BURER: So, he said something that maybe I  
7 should go ahead and ask someone in District 17 of why that  
8 particular decision was made then?

9 COMMANDER BELL: From their perspective, as to why  
10 they made that decision, yes. Certainly, the tow line that  
11 Sydney Foss had was a better configuration than we had.

12 MS. BURER: How much survival equipment and  
13 emergency equipment do you carry on the Alex Haley?

14 COMMANDER BELL: We have four life rafts that are  
15 25-men life rafts that are for our crew, and then we have  
16 emergent suits for -- one for each member of our crew, and  
17 each of our boat crewmen have survival equipment that they  
18 wear. Dry suits, emergent suits, as well as some small  
19 signaling flares, and sort of thing when they're underway in  
20 the small boat.

21 MS. BURER: Was there, at any time, communication  
22 in regards to maybe deploring a life raft, or maybe giving  
23 emergent suits, or dry suits to the crew members of the  
24 vessel?

25 COMMANDER BELL: Communications, outside of Alex

1 Haley, in regards to life rafts, no, we don't have any spare  
2 life rafts. The ones that we do are for ship -- Alex Haley  
3 survivability only. We had discussed options with district,  
4 with the command center, on the possibilities of making  
5 emergent suits available to the Selendang Ayu, and that was  
6 part of our plans, prior to the vessel grounding.

7 MS. BURER: Did you all ever succeed in being able  
8 to give emergent suits to the crew members?

9 COMMANDER BELL: No, we did not.

10 MS. BURER: Any particular reason for why not?

11 COMMANDER BELL: Our plan, after -- had not held  
12 the vessel. It was our plan that when 6020 came back on  
13 scene that we had already made arrangements to put eight  
14 survival suits in a rescue basket, and we were going to task  
15 6020 with hoisting that basket with those emergent suits,  
16 and delivering them to the Selendang Ayu.

17 Our conversations with Selendang Ayu at that  
18 point, the masters reported that the anchor appeared to be  
19 holding, and he was making other attempts to try to make  
20 repairs on the engine, and so, we felt that we had some  
21 time, when 6020 came back, to try to deliver those emergent  
22 suits, with the anticipation that the remaining eight crew  
23 members would be staying on longer through the evening than  
24 our plans to try to remove them from the vessel at earliest  
25 opportunity.



1           Then, the vessel reported grounding prior to 6020  
2    returning on scene, and then my priorities changed from  
3    trying to deliver those emergent suits, to getting the  
4    people off the vessel.

5           MS. BURER:   Could you actually see the rescue by  
6    the 6020?   Were you close enough --

7           COMMANDER BELL:   We could not see it.   We were  
8    three miles from --

9           MS. BURER:   Okay.

10          COMMANDER BELL:   -- from the vessel at that point.  
11    Once we launched -- initially, we were steaming off to the  
12    east to try to find a better lee out of the seas.   So, we  
13    could launch our helicopter at any time, and were proceeding  
14    off in that direction, because 6020 had not returned on  
15    scene yet.

16          When the vessel reported back to us that it  
17    appeared they had hit something, and that they wanted their  
18    crew members off, we came to a flight course to launch our  
19    helicopter, which had us facing away, or steaming away, at a  
20    very slow bow, away from the vessel.   So, at three miles, to  
21    be able to see any detail, was difficult at best.

22          MS. BURER:   Was there any -- at any time, any kind  
23    of communication that occurred between the Alex Haley, and  
24    the master of the vessel that was taken off channel 16?  
25    Just to get off the main channels?

1           COMMANDER BELL: I'm sorry, could you ask that  
2 again?

3           MS. BURER: Was there at any time, communications  
4 between the Alex Haley, and the master that was not on the  
5 regular channel, channel 16 that maybe it was on channel 83,  
6 or some other outside means?

7           COMMANDER BELL: Yes, I believe that we've talked  
8 to them on channels -- channel 6, and channel 16, and I  
9 think those were the -- I know we talked to the tugs on  
10 channel 7. I'm not sure if Selendang Ayu had switched to  
11 channel 7 at one time or another, but I know we had  
12 conversations on 6 and 16.

13          MS. BURER: Could you describe to me a little bit  
14 about helicopter 6513? How large it is? How many people  
15 can fit on it? What kind of emergency equipment you have on  
16 it? A little bit about the hoisting the basket, any of that  
17 stuff, could you address that?

18          COMMANDER BELL: I'm not an expert on the survival  
19 and rescue equipment that is on 6513. I do know that our  
20 purpose for launching them was to do -- at that point, we  
21 were the only asset on scene, so putting 6513 in the air  
22 with the intent on hoisting via basket, the eight remaining  
23 individuals, off the Selendang Ayu.

24               I know they took some equipment out of the  
25 aircraft to lighten the load. What specific that was, I'm

1 not sure. I do know 6513, once they reported the  
2 helicopter, the other helicopter, 6020 that had entered the  
3 water, they were attempting to hoist people out of the  
4 water, and they had deployed a life raft from the  
5 helicopter.

6 MS. BURER: A life raft to get the other  
7 passengers on there?

8 COMMANDER BELL: I'm not sure what their intent  
9 was launching that. They had reported that they had -- that  
10 they could see people in the water. It didn't come back  
11 over the radio as to how many, but once they reported that  
12 they had also reported that they had deployed their life  
13 raft.

14 MS. BURER: As far as you are concerned, you could  
15 not actually see the whole rescue, is that correct?

16 COMMANDER BELL: No, we could not.

17 MS. BURER: Do you, by any chance, know what the  
18 length of line is for the 6513 that's attached from the  
19 helicopter to the basket?

20 COMMANDER BELL: I do not, off the top of my head,  
21 no.

22 MS. BURER: Is there any place inside the  
23 helicopter that people can actually be buckled in?

24 COMMANDER BELL: Inside the 6513?

25 MS. BURER: Yes.

1                   COMMANDER BELL:  There are seats for that.

2   Whether they were used, or installed on this particular  
3   flight, I'm not sure.

4                   MS. BURER:  Do you have any questions?  I'm going  
5   to go ahead and turn it over.

6                   MR. MCPHILAMY:  Commander Bell, this is Senior  
7   Chief Sean MR. McPhilamy again.

8                   COMMANDER BELL:  Good evening, Chief.

9                   MR. MCPHILAMY:  Thank you very much.  One  
10   question, would, in your opinion, given the weather, the  
11   temperature of the seas, the time of year, would the wearing  
12   of survival suits for the crew members being evacuated, have  
13   hindered the evacuation, or helped their survival in any  
14   way?  Your opinion, please.

15                  COMMANDER BELL:  I mean, I haven't taken any  
16   classes or am an expert on survivability in the sea.  We  
17   have calculations that we use on the ship for determining  
18   survivability before each of our flights, but typically,  
19   we're doing those numbers with the equipment that the pilots  
20   use for standard flights, which consist of their dry suit.

21                  I mean, we have the same calculation tables for  
22   people, whether they're dressed for that or not.  The  
23   survival time, with the dry suits is certainly longer than  
24   if you're just in plain clothes.  We have not -- I have not  
25   (indiscernible) -- done any of those numbers from our

1 perspective.

2           Certainly, trying to put on, or get dressed in a  
3 dry suit, or an emergent suit would certainly add time to  
4 the process. Whether or not that would've hindered or  
5 slowed the operations again, of the helicopter, I'm not in a  
6 position to answer that question, as I'm not sure what type  
7 of training that their crews had, or what type of exposure  
8 they've had to those type of suits, or even whether we'd be  
9 able to deliver that under the short circumstances that we  
10 were dealing with.

11           MR. MCPHILAMY: Thank you very much. I'll turn  
12 this over to Captain Lew.

13           CAPTAIN LEW KWOK YUE: Captain Lew here. I'm just  
14 wondering, Commander, whether you would have any position on  
15 the helicopter decision to lower the rescue swimmer, because  
16 if I'm correct, the rescue swimmer was lowered to assist the  
17 crew evacuation on the last batch of people, and not on the  
18 first batch or second batch, over.

19           COMMANDER BELL: I did -- I was not aware of  
20 that - that the procedures -- the procedures for the actual  
21 helicopter operations in dealing with the H860, I'm not that  
22 familiar with. The 60 did not deploy with (indiscernible)  
23 specifically, with the Alex Haley.

24           We've done some operations in the past with them,  
25 but I'm not familiar what the standard operating procedures

1 are with that aircraft commander on whether he deploys his  
2 rescue swimmer, or not.

3 CAPTAIN LEW KWOK YUE: Thank you.

4 MS. BURER: I have a couple more questions.

5 Following up with what the Captain just said, what kind of  
6 training do you all do with other parties?

7 COMMANDER BELL: With other ships, or other  
8 aircraft?

9 MS. BURER: Other aircrafts or both?

10 COMMANDER BELL: We -- our -- we have a series of  
11 qualifications that all our crew members that are certified  
12 to be out on the flight deck go through. The air crew has  
13 their own certifications, and any time we embark a  
14 helicopter --

15 In this case, when 6513 came aboard, we have a  
16 standard set of training evolutions that we go through to  
17 ensure everybody's the most current qualified, and most of  
18 those consist of take off and landings under varying  
19 conditions, both daylight and night, and night vision goggle  
20 use.

21 We also train for vertical replenishment, bringing  
22 things on and off the deck, and we also train for in flight  
23 refueling, which is considered one of our standard drills,  
24 or practices. It's just a -- the acronym for that is HIFER,  
25 and we had trained all of those with 6513 for this patrol.

1           In the past, we have worked with different air  
2   crews, and other H860 crews here from air station Kodiak,  
3   but have not done operations with the H860 since I reported  
4   aboard back in May.

5           MS. BURER: Are you aware of anything as far as a  
6   C130 flying around during this operation?

7           COMMANDER BELL: We had logged that there was a  
8   C130 in the area, and we had radio guards with it at various  
9   times on -- since we -- since we arrived on scene there on  
10  the 8th.

11          MS. BURER: What is the purpose of a C130 being in  
12  the area?

13          COMMANDER BELL: For us, in that particular case,  
14  the C130 flies at a higher altitude. So, it's a good  
15  platform for managing communications between us, back to the  
16  air station, back to communication station Kodiak, if we're  
17  not able to get communications elsewhere.

18          MS. BURER: Would we be able to receive those  
19  communications? I assume that they're all recorded?  
20  Between the C130 and you?

21          COMMANDER BELL: Some of them -- some of them are,  
22  yes. Some of them are not, which particular conversations  
23  we had, at least from a digital standpoint, I'm not sure of,  
24  but our watch stand, or any time they take a radio guard for  
25  that aircraft, it gets recorded (indiscernible) by hand,

1   into their log book, and in any communications, the  
2   specifics of that conversation are recorded as best as they  
3   can.

4               MS. BURER:  Do you know how long they were  
5   involved with this evolution?

6               COMMANDER BELL:  I don't remember the exact time  
7   that they arrived on scene, but it wasn't until -- until the  
8   8th.  We did not have communications with the C130 on the  
9   previous day, on the 7th, and we had C130 over flights until  
10  we were relieved by the Sherman on that Saturday.

11              MS. BURER:  We'll probably need to get a hold of  
12  those logs too, then.  If I just make sure that I have it  
13  clear in my mind.  I do understand that you guys have your  
14  own boats, right?  Your rescue boats from the Alex Haley,  
15  but did you actually --

16              COMMANDER BELL:  We have two (indiscernible)  
17  inflatable boats, yes.

18              MS. BURER:  Right, and did you actually launch, or  
19  deploy them?

20              COMMANDER BELL:  We did not.

21              MS. BURER:  The other thing, too that I was  
22  actually kind of curious about is, can you describe to me  
23  exactly what a shoreline sweep is?

24              COMMANDER BELL:  The shoreline sweep is that the  
25  patrolling aircraft that we had, in that case, 6513, was



1 flying parallel to the shoreline, or parallel to the coast  
2 at that time, and what height or what altitude they were  
3 flying at, I'm not sure.

4 MS. BURER: Then, going back to the actual crew  
5 members from the vessel, when they arrived on your cutter,  
6 how long were they on your cutter?

7 COMMANDER BELL: For two days. They came aboard  
8 on the 8th, and then we kept them on board until we got back  
9 to Dutch Harbor.

10 MS. BURER: Were they urine tested at all during  
11 that time frame?

12 COMMANDER BELL: Yes, they were.

13 MS. BURER: What did they do for those two days?

14 COMMANDER BELL: The two days they were on board  
15 Alex Haley?

16 MS. BURER: Yes.

17 COMMANDER BELL: We assigned Lieutenant J. G.  
18 Caldwell to be the liaison officer for us to try to make  
19 them as comfortable as possible. We had -- we were able to  
20 provide each one of them with a rack space down below in  
21 what we call our 42-man berth (phonetic sp.).

22 We were able to get them meals. They interacted  
23 with the crew, off working hours. Most of the time, I think  
24 they spent their time, whether it was in the burthen area,  
25 or up on the mess deck, inter acting, talking with some of

1 the crew members. I know they were playing some board  
2 games, and watching television while they were on board.

3 MS. BURER: All right, thank you. Do you have any  
4 additional questions?

5 CAPTAIN LEW KWOK YUE: This is Captain Lew here  
6 again. While they were interacting with the crew, would you  
7 have any indication or knowledge that the crew would be  
8 asking information from the Selendang Ayu's crew member of  
9 the accidents and incidents, how it arise itself, and has  
10 any of them reported to you any information on that?

11 COMMANDER BELL: No, I don't. I think the -- most  
12 of the conversations, the ones that I specifically observed,  
13 were just asking questions about how they were doing, and  
14 was there anything that we could do for them. The -- there  
15 was no specific questioning of any of the crew members that  
16 I'm aware of.

17 I know that several of -- members of the Selendang  
18 Ayu wanted to talk to the master, and we made arrangements  
19 for one of them to actually get on the telephone to be able  
20 to talk. My executive officer helped make those  
21 arrangements through the -- through District 17, but I'm not  
22 aware of any other additional information that Selendang Ayu  
23 crew members provided to my crew, who subsequently relayed  
24 that to me, no.

25 CAPTAIN LEW KWOK YUE: Thank you.

1           COMMANDER BELL:  Yes, sir.

2           MS. BURER:  (Indiscernible?)  Well, I guess we'll  
3 go ahead and conclude our interview.  Thank you very much  
4 for your time.

5           COMMANDER BELL:  Yes, ma'am.

6           MS. BURER:  I'm going to turn it over, bye.

7           MR. MCPHILAMY:  Commander Bell, this is Senior  
8 Chief MR. McPhilamy, thank you very much again.  Is there  
9 anything further we can help you with?

10          COMMANDER BELL:  I don't believe so.  I know that  
11 Mr. Jones was asking about several copies of logs and other  
12 paperwork.  How is that going to work its way back towards  
13 me, or I guess, through the legal office, or maybe even  
14 public affairs, at one time?

15          MR. MCPHILAMY:  I think --

16                 (Whereupon, at 11:45 a.m., the interview was  
17 concluded.)

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## C E R T I F I C A T E

DEPOSITION SERVICES, INC., hereby certifies that the attached pages represent an accurate transcript of the electronic sound recording of the proceedings of the National Transportation Safety Board Interview regarding the grounding of the Selendang Ayu on December 9, 2004.

INTERVIEW OF COMMANDER BELL:

Eve Jemison, Transcriber

